

# Impact Of A 5-week Drum Circle Trial On Inmate Well-being In A Psychiatric Correctional Unit.

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## Flow of Presentation

- Introduction to Psychiatric Correctional Unit (PCU) programme
- Needs of Population
- Objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Psychiatric Correctional Unit

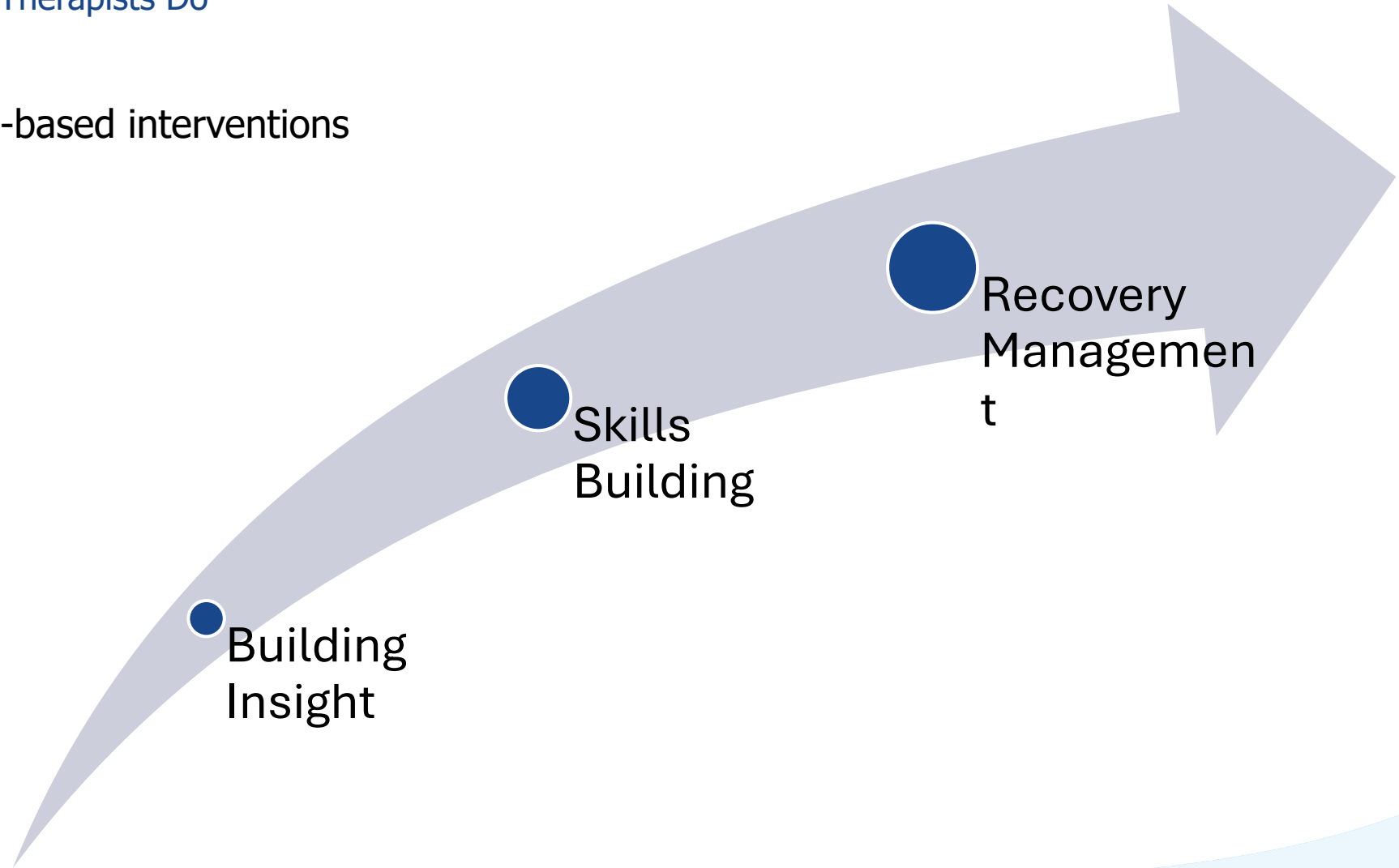
Specialised  
correctional unit  
offering a structured  
psychiatric  
rehabilitation  
programme.

- Range of major mental illnesses
  - Schizophrenia
  - Mood Disorders
  - Substance Use Disorders
  - Others
- Age: 18 and above
- Custodial sentence
- MDT approach to recovery

## Introduction

### What Occupational Therapists Do

- Primarily group-based interventions



Building  
Insight

Skills  
Building

Recovery  
Management

Restricted, Sensitive - Normal

## Needs of Forensic Population

- Highly restrictive environments might lead to “autonomy frustration”
- Low motivation and engagement secondary to institutionalisation
- Psychological vulnerability and emotional dysregulation
- Constricted identity with limited opportunities for positive self-expression
- Removed from normative social connections

## Enjoyment and Engagement As Mechanisms of Change

- Create positive emotional experiences to enhance participation
  - Focus on experiential engagement rather than reflective exercises
- Foster eudaimonic expression for meaningful recovery
  - Enable experiences of authentic self-expression
- Implement universal participation approaches
  - Develop programmes accessible regardless of abilities
  - Remove barriers that exclude individuals based on skills
- Establish safe spaces for identity reconstruction
  - Create environments where individuals can explore positive aspects of self without judgement

## Objectives

### 5-week Drumming Trial

- This study assessed whether a five-week drumming program improved
  - Mood
  - Reduced preoccupation with distressing thoughts
  - Increased enjoyment and engagement in a structured group activity

# Methods

## Subheader

- 6 clients from PCU
  - Voluntary participation
- 5 weeks, 1 session/ week
- Duration: 1.5-hour drumming
- Sessions included
  - Guided rhythmic exercises
  - Exploratory drumming
  - Group synchrony activities.

## Methods

Restricted, Sensitive - Normal



Pre- and post-session feedback



10-point Likert scale measured mood



5-point Likert scale:

Preoccupation with distressing thoughts

Perceived psychological safety

Enjoyment

Confidence



Open-ended responses captured subjective experiences and perceived benefits.

# Typical Drumming Session

Start of session → Check-in, warm-up

- Structured rhythmic patterns
- Call-and-response exercises
- Spontaneous play

Group closing

Reflections are interwoven between  
each segment

## Results

- Mood
  - Overall improvement in mood after each session
  - Improvement by 2–4 points per session for at least 3 inmates
- All participants reported feeling less preoccupied with distressing thoughts after each session
- All participants rated progressively higher in perceived psychological safety
  - Observable changes in participation
- All rated high on enjoyment throughout the drumming trial

## Results

- Feedback was gathered at the end of each session
- Qualitative reports:
  - Newfound interest in drumming
  - Intervention also facilitated positive peer interactions
  - Increased confidence
  - Reduced stress

## Results

“Looking forward to the next session”

“I enjoyed exploring my own beats”

“Strongly suggest for other inmates to join!”

“This session needs to be longer”

“I feel less disturbed at the end than when I first felt at the start of the session”

“I am able to focus on drumming”

“This is a confidence boost!”

“I am more comfortable with each session”

## Findings

- A promising OT intervention in a correctional setting
- Inclusive engagement regardless of musical background
  - Non-judgmental and safe space
  - Removes preoccupation over musical ability → facilitates trial & error of rhythm patterns (higher executive functioning)
- Participants were more empowered to take up non-follower roles (i.e., leader, rhythm anchor) within the drum circle
  - Shift in occupational identity and reinforcing sense of agency
  - Improves sense of self

## Findings

- Cathartic experience
  - Emotion regulation outlet
- Social Participation
  - Facilitate positive peer relations- Cooperative social participation
  - Spontaneous and organic expressions of appreciation
  - Impact of positive affirmations

## Conclusion

- Rhythm-based interventions may enhance inmate rehabilitation and well-being
- Future considerations:
  - Larger sample size
  - Longer intervention period is recommended to explore long-term therapeutic effects

Thank You

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